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Critical Exploration of Select Fanfiction Texts

With special references to Lady Salazar, Rorscarch's Bot, Stormsmith, deadaestheticchores, ActuallyRandomPerson, Lovegingernuts, blueannawriting, mandancie, spartanj258, Rhys, Grahame-Smith

Doctoral Resume

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- **Introduction**

Humans are different from other species because they express their emotions, thoughts and feelings in the form of creative expressions, such as art, literature, music, cinema, play, etc. It is a human tendency to appreciate, imitate and critique work created by someone else. This tendency is commonly shared by humanity across the globe. Great creative work incites inspiration and motivation in others to create something of their own as a tribute to the original. Also, it is a form of imagination stemmed from the appreciation and the desire to be a part of the original work in some way. Many historical artists have created transformative works by borrowing characters and plots from classic literature such as Greek-Roman myth, medieval romance literature such as King Arthur, Alexander the Great, and other historical figures. In popular term, these transformative works in the literary form are called fan fiction.

With the turn of the millennia, electronic literature has changed the lives of many readers. New forms of creative works have emerged for reading and enjoyment of the masses such as webnovels, hypertext, video poetry, twitterature,

etc. Online publishing platforms have made transformative fiction more accessible, convenient and significant to the amateur writers who want to hone their skills without any legal and publishing restrictions.

With the rise of Internet, fan fiction has found its safe space where billions of fans can share interests for their favorite show/movie/literature and also, can write stories as a tribute to the original work. These websites are called fandoms or fan communities based on their common interest, for example, Harry Potter, Jane Austen, and Sherlock Holmes, etc.

Initially, fan fiction was considered as an infringement of the copyright law, but slowly many are accepting it as a legitimate form of creative expression for the love of the original work. Some notable writers have established themselves by publishing their fan work as independent fiction. Now fan fiction has been an inevitable part of popular culture and the lives of emerging creative writers.

Unlike text-based approaches such as New Criticism, which are grounded upon some objective meaning already present in the work being examined, reader-response criticism argues that a text has no meaning before a reader experiences—reads—it.

The reader-response critic's job is to examine the scope and variety of reader reactions and analyze the ways in which different readers, sometimes called "interpretive communities," make meaning out of both purely personal reactions and inherited or culturally conditioned ways of reading. The theory is popular in

both the United States and Germany; its main theorists include Stanley Fish, David Bleich, and Wolfgang Iser.

This study will aim to explore the world of online fan fiction communities and their contribution to the literary world as a form of creative fiction. It will also study the progress and need for legitimatization of fan fiction as a literary trend/form.

- **Statement of the Problem**

Fan fiction as a legitimate form of writing is often overlooked and its importance is gravely understudied. Legitimization of fan fiction is much less discussed in scholarly research till now. Even though it has its roots in print publication since the 18th century, it is still considered as uncreative, illegal and unsocial.

This study aims to explore the role of online fan fiction in popular culture and whether it can be considered as a literary form.

- **Literature Review**

To study fan fiction as online creative writing cannot be carried out by one research method alone. The academically neglected field of fan fiction has some scholarly papers and literature associated with it. They are as follows:

In his book, ***Textual poachers: Television fans and participatory culture***.(1992), Henry Jenkins introduced the idea that some fans become "textual poachers" by creating new cultural materials from essays to fan fiction, art, etc

inspired by their favorite TV shows. This work is said to be seminal and foundational work in the field of fan studies. This study set in motion the future of academic interest in fandom and fan-made creative works.

Sheenagh Pugh's ***The democratic genre: Fan fiction in a literary context*** *(2005)* examines how anonymous authors bring their own gloss and invention to their favorite novels, films, and TV series; develop characters; expand narratives; and, in the slash genre, explore homosexual relationships between otherwise heterosexual characters, this analysis covers fanfic terminology, its mechanisms for participation and support, the differences between fan fiction and conventional publishing, and the genre's literary merits.

Rebecca W. Black's book, ***Adolescents and online fan fiction*** (2008), presents an ethnographic and discourse analytic study of a highly popular online fan fiction writing space. Its analyses highlight the range of sophisticated literacy practices that English language learning youth engage in through their fan-related activities. Discussion also centers on how opportunities for language socialization, literacy, and identity development converge and diverge between academic settings and informal learning contexts such as fan fiction sites.

Francesca Coppa, in her***The Fanfiction Reader:Folk Tales for the Digital Age.***(2017), showcases the extent to which the archetypal storytelling exemplified by fanfiction has continuities with older forms: the communal tale-telling cultures of the past and the remix cultures of the present have much in common. Short stories that draw on franchises such as *Star Trek, Star Wars, Doctor Who, James*

Bond, and others are accompanied by short contextual and analytical essays wherein Coppa treats fan fiction—a genre primarily written by women and minorities—as a rich literary tradition in which non-mainstream themes and values can thrive.

- **Objectives**

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To trace the roots of fan fiction in canonical literature and to examine its evolving nature in contemporary writing.
2. To study the forms and genres in online fan fiction writing
3. To study how transformative works allow more artistic liberty
4. To explore fan fiction as a literary trend with prospectus of growth
5. To examine legality, fair use and copyright issues with fan fiction as an acceptable literary work.

- **Research Questions**

The study will aim to explore fan fiction writing as literary genre on the basis of following questions:

a. What are the traces of fan fiction in canonical literature?
b. What are the literary forms and genres in online fan fiction writing?
c. How transformative works allow more artistic liberty?
d. Does fan fiction as a literary trend have the potential for growth in the future?

e. What are the issues in establishing fan fiction as a legitimate literary form?

- **Significance of the study**

Although many scholarly articles have been published on the various aspects of fan fiction, no significant study has been carried out based on fan fiction as a crucial literary trend and its future in creative writing.

This study will also trace its roots and current occurring forms and genres with reference to popular online fan communities. The present study will explore the legal implications for fan fiction as a legitimate literary trend.

- **Scope of the study**

The scope of the proposed study will be limited to fan fiction based on literature, movies, TV shows, etc. Fan fiction which is easily available to read in print or through online sources such as websites and other media platforms, will be considered for the scope of the study.

The study will not consider drabble, flash fiction, twitterature, songfics, or works that are shorter than 100 words in writing. Also, fiction based on video games and metaverse will not come under the scope of the study.

- **Research Methodology**

The research will be descriptive, qualitative and exploratory with reference of select online fan fiction communities.

In the present research, MLA 9th edition documentation style of parenthetical citation in the text and alphabetical list of works at the end of the chapter i.e. in Select Bibliography will be adopted.

- **Tentative Chapter Scheme**

  The tentative chapter scheme will be as follow:

  Chapter 1: Introduction

  This chapter will provide the necessary background information to understand the proposed study. It will also discuss the objectives, hypothesis, significance, scope and methodology of the study.

  Chapter 2: Tracing the roots of Fan Fiction in Canonical Literature

  This chapter will trace the earlier works of fan fiction such as **Wide Sargasso Sea**, **Pride and Prejudice and Zombies.**

  Chapter 3: Online Fan Fiction Writing: Form and Genres

  This chapter will explore popular online fandom on the websites like www.archieveofourown.org, www.live-journal.com, www.wattpad.com, www.fanfiction.net, etc. This chapter will focus on studying popular genres and terminology used in fan fiction writing.

  Chapter 4: Transformative works and expressing artistic liberty through fan fiction

  This chapter will study the association between transformative works and artistic liberty. The emphasis will be on the creative channelization of the curiosity and passion of the fans into fiction based on the original works.

Chapter 5: Fan fiction: A literary trend dominating popular culture

This chapter will study how popular culture influences fan fiction writing while setting trends and vice versa.

Chapter 6: Legality and Copyright

This chapter will observe how copyright laws are ambiguous and needs improvement regarding the fair use of fan fiction based on legally protected literature, movies or TV shows.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This chapter will conclude the study and discuss the findings. It will also discuss the scope of further studies on the concerned subject matter.

Select Bibliography/Webliography

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